



## Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

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**AGENDA DATE:** July 1, 2009

**TO:** Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

**FROM:** Front Country Trails Task Force Staff

**SUBJECT:** **Front Country Trails Maintenance Update**

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Front Country Trails (FCT) Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force receives a status report on FCT trail maintenance projects.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The purpose of this staff report is to provide the FCT Task Force with a report on recent trail maintenance and coordination projects. In early 2009, agency staff began working with trails organizations to scope opportunities to develop volunteer projects. Staff determined that trail maintenance projects provided a good opportunity to build collaboration and achieve needed trail improvements, while also moving forward with the FCT management recommendations. The Forest Service plays a leadership role in trail maintenance work, trail maintenance training, and the development of volunteer services agreements.

### **Forest Service Sponsored Trail Maintenance**

Although the Forest Service trail maintenance efforts on front country trails were minimal this year, due to a lack of funding, the Santa Barbara Ranger District fielded a two-person water bar crew during fall 2008 and winter 2009 to clean out drainage features on several trails. In addition, in March 2009, the Oxnard City Corps trail crew worked a five-day period brushing the upper sections of the Rattlesnake Trail. This organized trail crew is currently working on trails in the Zaca Fire areas, through funding from a National Emergency Grant, tied directly to fire damaged trails.

### **Volunteer Trail Maintenance Projects with Santa Barbara County Trails Council**

In January 2009, the Santa Barbara County Trails Council (SBTC) offered to initiate volunteer trail maintenance efforts on the front country trails. FCT staff met with the SBTC to explore a partnership for the purpose of organizing, recruiting, and sustaining trail maintenance volunteers. It was agreed that the Forest Service, the lead agency in

trail maintenance and experience with trail volunteer programs, would play a leadership role.

The SBTC designated Ray Ford as its Trails Coordinator to develop the volunteer trail maintenance program and seek matching grant funds. As a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, SBTC proposes to seek grant funding opportunities, provide General Liability Insurance to cover trail workers, and expand their website to include volunteer program coordination. As the first step in this effort, the Forest Service developed a one-year Agreement for Sponsored Volunteer Services with SBTC (Attachment 1), and SBTC agreed to begin to develop and recruit volunteers for trail maintenance. The Forest Service further agreed to assist in certifying trail leaders through a coordinated training workshop.

### **Agreement for Sponsored Volunteer Services**

The Agreement for Sponsored Volunteer Services (ASVS) is the key mechanism by which the Forest Service can work with nongovernmental organizations to pursue volunteer trail projects. Volunteers under the terms and conditions of the ASVS are considered federal employees and covered while working at the project site. The conditions and terms of the agreement state that only certified trail leaders (trails bosses) as determined by the Forest Service can conduct a project and must be physically present on the project site. Upon certification, a trail leader can act as an agent of the Forest Service and the trails organization in performing duties as required in the ASVS, such as:

1. Request advanced approval for each project.
2. Obtain participant signatures prior to starting work.
3. Complete Job Hazard Analysis for each project that is reviewed and signed by all participants. Safety briefing to be conducted for each project.
4. Maintain and provide work accomplishment reports.
5. Safekeeping of all sign-in sheets and Job Hazard Analysis documentation. Documentation will be provided to the Forest Service upon request.
6. Volunteer participant status will terminate at the end of the work day, and volunteers are expected to sign up for each project day.

The Forest Service provides technical support, special project equipment, and/or tools as available. The Forest Service assists in additional Trail Leader's training as needed. The Forest Service is responsible for promptly processing of all injury claims.

### **Trail Leaders Training Work Day**

A Trail Leaders Training Work Day on March 14<sup>th</sup> at Stevens Park resulted in 16 newly certified Trail Leaders. Forest Service and City staff attended the work day to train and welcome the new leaders. SBTC Trail Coordinator Ray Ford facilitated the training day agenda. Ray Ford developed a project guide entitled "Conducting a Successful Volunteer Trail Project" for all participants (Attachment 2). The morning session concentrated on introducing Trail Leaders to the expectations of the agencies and the

SBTC. Time was then dedicated to understanding the required documentation to conduct a Forest Service volunteer project. The afternoon session was devoted to trail maintenance techniques, crew organization, and tool use, with the group making some needed improvements to the City's trail leading out of Stevens Park.

### **SBTC Trail Volunteers Outreach**

To assist in the coordination of a new volunteer trail maintenance program, the SBTC developed a comprehensive website. The following resources can be found at [www.SBTrails.org](http://www.SBTrails.org):

1. Certified Trail Leaders List, an e-mail list that notifies all certified leaders of pending future projects.
2. SBTC web calendar to link projects and notify interested volunteers.
3. A variety of links including sections on trail design, techniques, and tool use.
4. Downloadable list of all documents necessary to conduct a project.
5. Standardized report and project follow up form. When completed an automated copy is sent to the Forest Service and SBTC.

### **International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) Sustainable Trails Workshop**

The IMBA Trail Care Crew (TCC) members were in Santa Barbara over the weekend of March 27<sup>th</sup> to present two (free) trails related workshops to the Santa Barbara Community. Sponsored by the local Santa Barbara Mountain Bike Trail Volunteers (SBMTV) it was reported as a great success. Thursday's workshop titled "Club Care" concentrated on techniques used by nonprofits to support group's mission, goals, members, and boards of directors.

The "Sustainable Trails" workshop, a two-part, full day event, was led by the TCC on Saturday March 28. Twenty-eight people attended, including participants from SBMTV, LPFA, the Sierra Club, MTC, and staff members from the Forest Service, City, and County. TCC covered the details of building sustainable trails with an excellent presentation, which included:

- Fall line trails and why they unsustainable.
- Causes of erosion, user created trails, and conflicts.
- Trail Grade: the half rule and maximum sustainable grades.
- Building and maintaining switchbacks and climbing turns.
- Erosion control: Rolling contours, grade reversals, dips, nicks, rock armoring, and out-slope.
- User routing: Anchors, corrals, chokes, and points of interest.
- Trail re-routes and recovery (re-vegetation).
- Signage and trail management.

For the second half of the workshop, the class carpooled to the Jesusita trailhead and re-grouped for instruction and on-trail demonstrations including:

- Tool use and safety precautions. Participants were taught how to use & safely carry McLeods, Pulaskis, and shovels; Potential trail hazards--poison oak, bees, snakes, etc. were discussed, as well as what to do in the event of an emergency, and volunteers with first aid certifications were identified.
- Inclinometer Training. Participants were taught how to use an inclinometer and were given the opportunity to experiment with it to measure the grade of a trail to check its sustainability.
- Rock armoring, a technique used to make an over-grade trail section more sustainable, was demonstrated by the TCC crew, who in turn, recruited a number of the workshop participants to complete the job on a six-foot section of the trail.

After the safety talk and demos, the participants worked in small groups on several sections of the trail, practicing water control techniques by modifying some of Jesusita Trail's outdated water bars into nicks and dips, and adding proper and strategically placed water control structures in several locations. SBMTV board member Chris Orr provided a hands-on opportunity to practice the most current trail maintenance techniques.

### **Trails Day Events**

Most recently, the FCT staff and stakeholders group agreed to support three "open to all" trails day events; California State Trails Day on April 18<sup>th</sup>, National Trails Day on June 13<sup>th</sup>, and National Public Lands Day on September 26<sup>th</sup>. The purpose behind such events is to bring community trail groups together to work on a collaborative project and support an after work celebration of trail accomplishments.

Californian State Trails Day occurred on April 18<sup>th</sup> with 12 volunteers participating in a trail brushing project on North Tunnel Trail. Los Padres Forest Association sponsored the project and provided tools. Santa Barbara Chicken Ranch restaurant and SBMTV provided food and drink for the after work celebration.

National Trails Day on June 13 focused on hazard reduction for the trails affected by the Jesusita Fire. Held from Skofield Park, more than 100 volunteers worked on the Jesusita, Tunnel, Tunnel Connector, Rattlesnake, and West Fork Cold Spring trails. A significant amount of progress was made on all of the trails. The Santa Barbara Chicken Ranch provided lunch for the volunteers.

**ATTACHMENT:**

1. Agreement for Sponsored Volunteer Services with SBTC, February 26, 2009
2. Santa Barbara Trail Council Leaders Guide, "Conducting a Successful Volunteer Trail Project"

**SUBMITTED BY:** Kerry Kellogg, Recreation Specialist, Los Padres National Forest